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Report

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An investigation into the use of Cantonese in Manchester

Jennifer Chan
Clare Liang
Hannah Martin

University of Manchester
School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures
Samuel Alexander Building
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

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Introduction

The thriving Chinese community of Chinatown lends itself to an investigation into the use of Cantonese. This was our primary reason for selecting this central M1 location, alongside the fact that it is one of the largest Chinese communities in England. A census taken in 2001 reported that out of 247,403 Chinese citizens in Britain, 26,887 resided in the North West of England (Lo 2009, 1). Consequently, it is often described as the 'heart' of the Chinese community; Cantonese can be consistently seen and heard in all areas of community life. As a group, we initially inspected the area and found by looking at signs, shop fronts and miscellaneous literature, that alongside Cantonese, other languages were also present, for example, Mandarin, Hakka and Vietnamese. Although we planned to focus on Cantonese, this provided the components for an interesting investigation. A question which initially arose was how could so many languages survive? In addition, how were these languages managing to retain their cultural and linguistic identity far away from their homeland? As well as the Chinatown area, we also wanted to investigate the use of Cantonese in Chinese culture. There are numerous services targeting specifically Chinese people which will have a significant effect on the stability and success of the language, for example, Chinese societies and churches.

In Manchester, there are two Chinese churches, namely Manchester Chinese Christian Church and Manchester Alliance Church. The setup of these churches shows how multilingualism works in Manchester today, with Sunday services being offered in English, Cantonese and Mandarin (MCCC Website 2010; MAC Website 2010). There are also television and radio programmes available that embrace the multilingual mentality, for example Eastern Horizon, a radio programme broadcast from Manchester, in Chinese. By analysing how popular and integral these services are to the Chinese community, we can then discuss their impact on the use of Cantonese. The opening of an HSBC branch specifically aimed at the 30,000-strong Chinese community in is also evidence of the demand of services geared towards Cantonese speakers. This branch offers '*a dedicated Cantonese-speaking business banking manager and bilingual staff*' (Butt 2003), which is a clear indication that the Cantonese language and the community of speakers is a significant influence in Manchester. In

our study we aimed to investigate how much this translates to the use of Cantonese in specifically the Chinatown district.

Methodology

Our aim was to investigate the extent and importance of the use of Cantonese in Chinatown. Our primary method for data collection was a questionnaire. However, this had to be partially modified to improve clarity and to correct some ambiguity. An example of this was rectifying the error in which we overlapped the age ranges; this was a result of a simple mistake in the typing of the text. In addition, we omitted the questions specific to shops and institutions from our street survey in order to focus on the language use of individuals who work, shop and socialise in Chinatown. This broadened our investigation allowing us to acquire information on the area more extensively and therefore generate a better representation of the topic. It also made it easier to collect data as we could use all the members of public, not just specifically shop owners and workers. This was very beneficial as we learnt quickly that not all people are very willing to participate in voluntary street surveys. We conducted the surveys on two Wednesday afternoons, individually approaching members of the public in different areas of Chinatown, though for safety reasons the rest of the group were always nearby. We believe this made us seem more approachable and less intimidating to the participants. Initially we planned to visit Chinatown every Wednesday and conduct other investigations fortnightly on Mondays. The group maintained the scheduled plan well, with only one meeting cancelled due to illness. However, our original target of 100 samples had to be reduced because we found that the data collection was very time consuming and it was often difficult to find willing participants. We eventually collected 40 complete samples that were from a range of different people, some whom were not Cantonese speakers.

(See Appendix for questionnaire and table of results).

Findings and discussion

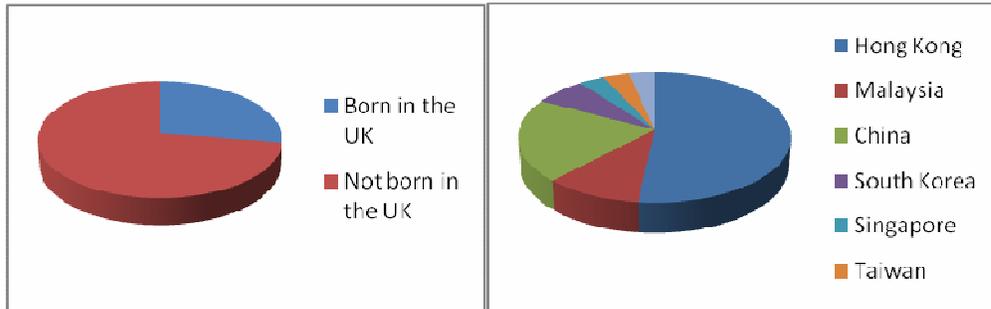
Discussion into the origins of the people of Chinatown:

In Britain it has been reported up to 247,403 Chinese citizens are in permanent residence (Lo 2009,1); this is one reason why we decided to investigate this topic further. In this section we are going to focus on the individual origins of the people highlighted in our study. Below there are two pie charts,

one quantitatively representing the number of people born in the United Kingdom or elsewhere and the second indicating the birth place of the individuals not born in the UK:

Fig. 1. Individual's birth place.

Fig.2. Individual's specific place of birth.



The results show a varied outcome from a relatively small sample which we found to be representative of the diverse culture of Manchester, a topic that has been explored many times before due to the rich resources the city holds. Our results coincide with previous studies, such as Sandy Lo from the University of Manchester, who found that the five main countries of origin for Cantonese speakers were Hong Kong, Malaysia, British born, People's Republic of China and other countries (Lo 2009, 1). Interestingly, although in both the highlighted study and ours, Hong Kong is the most common country of origin, most recently the immigrants are travelling from China as cited by Sandy Lo (Lo 2009,1). The study suggests that a high percentage of the residents in the centre of Manchester and the China Town area have migrated there from elsewhere, a clear explanation for the diversity found and indicative of why Cantonese is still prominent alongside seventy other community languages in the area (The Language Contact Manchester Website 2009). It is common for individuals to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity in a new surrounding even with the constant onset of influencing factors, the phenomena of people affiliating with other like-minded individuals is known as 'diasporas' (Matras 2009, 1). It has been made easier globally for groups to retain 'diasporic' identities with advances in communication and modern technology such as 'Skype' alongside easier and cheaper travel, both encouraging heightened language contact.

Specifically, many of our samples were students that came to England for a better standard of living and education, this outcome was also highlighted in Lo's study, *'the community has a significant number of individuals with 'a high level of qualifications'* (Lo 2009, 1). In addition, 86% of our individuals' primary reason for coming to the UK was for education or related job opportunities.

Multilingualism is not always recognised by public institutions; however, our results show that there are many existing for the Cantonese speaking population such as, specifically Chinese, churches, societies and language schools. The general trend from our results show that the majority of people have come from Hong Kong, however, we have only used a small sample and a more accurate picture would need further investigation. Our results also suggest a minority of people in China Town were born in the UK, though this should also be explored further for a more accurate interpretation. Another factor that may have influenced our result is that the people we surveyed may not have been representative of the whole Cantonese community. This could also be improved with a larger sample, better funding and more time for the study.

Alongside issues of birth place, we should take into account other influential factors. Interactional settings are important in societal multilingualism studies as they have a great impact on a person regardless of whether they were born in the UK or not. Individual interlocutors are often categorised according to the purpose of interaction, place and mode and then into settings, for example, neighbourhood, shops, school, attractions and households (Matras 2009, 42). For each of these settings our bilingual speakers have a consistent use of one of their languages, for example, in China Towns many supermarkets, Cantonese could be the consistent choice. This is an interesting topic as it could suggest how languages are being kept alive out of their original habitat and is influential on the amount of time individuals use Cantonese in Manchester.

Discussion on how an occupation affects the use of Cantonese

Our results show that the majority of people that we surveyed had their primary motivation for being in Manchester as education, predominantly being students, which indicates that Manchester has a successful academic community. This is to be expected, with two successful universities and many more educational establishments. However, these students may only live in Manchester temporarily during their term time at university; this makes it difficult to get an accurate representative of the full-time residents. We initially thought this could be a problem but after discussing the issues we decided they are still contributing to the success of Cantonese in Manchester and therefore should be acknowledged in our study. Many of the students we surveyed are from Hong Kong; often implying they started learning Cantonese from when they were born, as Cantonese is the official language of the country. Furthermore, *'the majority of the Chinese community in Manchester originated from the Hong Kong area (92.8%)'* (Liao 1992). This may be a

reason for the dominant nature Cantonese seems to have within the community; it was instigated by such high numbers of immigration from Hong Kong.

Three of students who we spoke to were from China; none of them had lived in UK for long. Moreover, all of them knew how to speak Mandarin Chinese and only one of the students knew Cantonese, he had been learning the language since he was 17. This suggests that he was probably still learning Cantonese because he uses it fairly regularly in areas such as Chinatown. From the table of results (see appendix) we can see that almost half of the participants learnt Cantonese at an older age or did not learn it at all. However, we have to again acknowledge that, with such a small sample, it is very difficult to get a representative depiction of the situation.

Many Cantonese and Hakka speakers migrated to UK because they wanted to provide a better living standard for their future generations as many of them have come from a background of '*peasants and labourers*' (Creese 2007, 5). Our results indicate that many of the employed participants had jobs that were associated with the catering business, with four waiters and a restaurant owner, these tend to be family based businesses; according to the UK Census in 2001, 71% of Chinese people worked in the hotel or restaurant sector (Creese 2007, 5). This result also coincides with Sandy Lo, who found in her study that many of the China Town residents had jobs in the catering industry (Lo 2009, 1).

Unfortunately, only a few of our participants were involved in Chinese organisations such as Chinese Schools, these are establishments which have a primary purpose of teaching young Chinese students how to read and write traditional and simplified Chinese. Our group were hoping for more of an impact from this sector as it would explain much of the success Cantonese has had in retaining its position within the community. Participants told us that students often start around six years of age and can be learning until the end of their academic career. Chinese schools have been employed in the area in order to preserve and pass down the language and culture to the next generation, giving them real importance for the Chinese community, not only preserving their culture but also reminding them of their heritage. Currently, there is very little funding for these schools, so a lot of the materials used are provided by other Chinese organisations. This is indicative of the support Cantonese has, with companies willing to donate goods free of charge for the cause. Furthermore, lack of funding also means that there is often no financial support for the teachers; many are volunteers from various backgrounds. Our results show the individuals that volunteer within Cantonese education are usually students and can generally speak only Cantonese and English (Creese 2007, 6).

Discussion into the use of Cantonese in everyday life

One of our research aims was to investigate the extent and importance of the Cantonese language in Chinatown. Our survey questions were designed to elicit data which we would be able to analyse with regard to amount of Cantonese that individuals use and whether or not being in Chinatown had an effect on this outcome. As expected, our results show that if individuals used Cantonese in their everyday lives, then they would use Cantonese to the same extent or even more so when in Chinatown. For example, from the table, of the seven people who said that they use Cantonese for 21-40% of daily life, this percentage increased to 41-60% in two cases and 61%+ for the rest, when in Chinatown. All those who said they used Cantonese for 61%+ of daily life, said unsurprisingly that they also used 61%+ when in Chinatown. It is important to note, however, that many of the individuals in this category are employed in Chinatown itself, which is conducive to the results we acquired. Of our 40 tokens, only 8 people had no knowledge of Cantonese, which suggests that there is a very high number of Cantonese speakers who frequently use this language in the area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our results show that the use of Cantonese is significant in Chinatown and the Cantonese speaking community in Manchester is still thriving. One of the shop assistants we spoke to commented on how there is a much wider range of people and nationalities that come to the shop, than approximately ten years ago, and yet Cantonese is still the predominant language of interaction between staff and customers. From this, one could predict that Cantonese will continue to have a significant presence in Chinatown in the future.

Our results clearly show that Cantonese speakers use comparatively more of the language when in Chinatown than they would anywhere else. This seems like an obvious observation but distinctly shows how essential the Chinatown area and its density of shops and services are to the Cantonese speaking community. It also indicates how much of an impact this relatively small district has on the individuals' language use. In addition, Chinatown could be seen as a sanctuary for this language, which has managed to maintain its linguistic identity with competition from high levels of diversity for so long.

There are several improvements that we could make to our investigation for increased accuracy. Our sample was small but given more time, man-power and preferably funding, we could have collected

more and possibly better quality data, with the use of a monetary incentive, giving a better depiction of the situation. Also, all of our data was collected on two Wednesday afternoons, which limited the range of people we were likely to encounter, possibly investigating the same regulars rather than a diverse group of people. For a more representative data sample, surveys could be conducted at weekends and other times throughout the day. Another factor which could have affected our findings was that many members of the public were unwilling to take the survey and their input may have had some significant impact on our study. This is one of the unavoidable disadvantages of taking street surveys, however, we tried to make our data as representative as possible by approaching as many people as we could in the time constraint we had.

Overall, Cantonese is still thriving in the community today and we predict it will continue to do so with the evident support and devotion the Chinese people express towards the language.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Age group: (Circle)

0-20 21-40 41-60 61+

2. What is your main profession?

3. Are you: (Circle)

Self-employed Employed Unemployed

4. Were you born in the U.K? (Circle)

No Yes

5. If 'No' where were you born and what were your primary reasons for moving to the U.K?

6. How many years have you been living in Manchester?

7. At what age did you learn Cantonese?

8. At what age did you learn English?

9. Do you speak any other languages, if so which?

10. For how much of your day do you use Cantonese? (Circle)

0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61%+

11. How much of your direct family use Cantonese? (Circle)

All most some none

12. In China Town specifically, do you use Cantonese: (Circle)

0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61%+

13. Do you attend any Cantonese speaking organisations, for example, church, school, media related?

Thank you for helping us with our survey.

Table of Results

#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		20	0	2	n/a	0-20%	most	0-20%	
2	21-40	S ASS	EM	N	HK - Fam Emig	7	0	4	Mnd	60%+	all	60%+	
3	21-40	STU	UNEM	Y		22	0	3	n/a	21-40%	most	41-60%	Chi Soc
4	41-60	ACC	EM	N	MALAY - Edu	20	20	2	Mnd/Malay/Hok	0-20%	some	0-20%	
5	41-60	WAIT	EM	N	MALAY - Job Opp	9	0	2	Mnd/Malay/Hok	61%+	all	61%+	
6	21-40	WAIT	EM	N	CHINA -Job Opp	4	0	20	Mnd	61%+	all	61%+	
7	21-40	S ASS	EM	N	CHINA - Job Opp	4	18	19	Mnd	61%+	some	61%+	
8	21-40	S ASS	EM	N	CHINA- Job Opp	7	2	12	Mnd	61%+	most	61%+	
9	21-40	S ASS	EM	N	HK - Job Opp	6	0	16	Mnd	61%+	all	61%+	
10	41-60	S OWN	S EM	N	HK - Job Opp	24	0	23	Mnd	61%+	all	61%+	
11	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	CHINA - Edu	2	17	18	Mnd	0-20%	some	0-20%	ChiSoc
12	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	1	0	12	n/a	61%+	all	61%+	
13	21-40	HWIFE	UNEM	N	MALAY - Fam Emig	21	0	0	Mnd/ Malay/ Hak	41-60%	most	61%+	
14	21-40	S ASS	EM	N	HK - Fam Emig	5	0	11	Hak	61%+	all	61%+	
15	41-60	S OWN	S EM	N	HK - Job Opp	31	0	11	Mnd/Hak	61%+	most	61%+	
16	41-60	SOLIC	S EM	N	HK - Edu	25	0	4	Mnd	61%+	most	61%+	
17	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	S KOREA - Edu	1	n/a	18	n/a	n/a	none	n/a	
18	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	S KOREA - Edu	2	n/a	18	n/a	n/a	none	n/a	
19	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	MACAU - Edu	2	16	15	Mnd/ Port	0-20%	some	0-20%	
20	21-40	WAIT	EM	N	HK - Job Opp	4	0	13	n/a	61%+	all	61%+	
21	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	2	0	4	Mnd	21-40%	all	61%+	ChiSoc
22	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	2	0	4	Hak, Mnd	21-40%	all	61%+	
23	21-40	UNEM	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	3	0	3	Mnd	0-20%	none	0-20%	
24	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	CHINA - Edu	2	n/a	11	Mnd	n/a	none	n/a	
25	21-40	STU	UNEM	N	CHINA - Edu	2	n/a	5	Mnd, Shang	n/a	some	n/a	
26	41-60	R OWN	S EM	Y		35	0	0	n/a	41-60%	all	61%+	ChiSch
27	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		2	0	0	n/a	21-40%	most	41-60%	ChiSch
28	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		20	n/a	0	Vietnamese	n/a	none	n/a	
29	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		19	n/a	0	Vietnamese	n/a	none	n/a	
30	21-40	STU	UNEM	N	SING - Edu	1	n/a	3	Hok, Mnd	n/a	none	n/a	
31	41-60	HWIFE	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	3	0	12	Mnd	61%+	all	61%+	ChiSoc
32	21-40	STU	UNEM	Y		3	0	0	n/a	0-20%	most	41-60%	ChiSch
33	21-40	WAIT	EM	N	HK - Fam Emig	6	0	4	Mnd	61%+	all	61%+	
34	0-20	STU	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	2	0	3	Mnd	21-40%	all	61%+	ChiCh
35	21-40	STU	UNEM	N	HK - Edu	2	0	4	Mnd	21-40%	all	61%+	ChiCh
36	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		19	n/a	0	Vietnamese	n/a	none	n/a	
37	21-40	STU	UNEM	Y		3	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	none	n/a	
38	21-40	STU	UNEM	N	TAIWAN - Edu	2	n/a	4	Taiwanese/Mnd	n/a	none	n/a	
39	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		2	0	0	n/a	21-40%	all	61%+	ChiCh

40	0-20	STU	UNEM	Y		19	0	0	n/a		0-20%	most	0-20%	
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Table Key

- ACC- Accountant
- ChiCh- Chinese Church
- ChiSch- Chinese School
- ChiSoc- Chinese Society
- Edu- Education
- EM- Employed
- Fam Emig- Family Emigrated
- Hak- Hakka
- HK-Hong Kong
- Hok- Hokkien
- HWIFE- Housewife
- Job Opp- Job Opportunities
- MALAY- Malaysia
- Mnd-Mandarin
- N-No
- Port- Portuguese
- R OWN- Restaurant Owner
- SASS- Shop Assistant
- Shang- Shanghainese
- SING- Singapore
- SOLIC- Solicitor
- S OWN- Shop Owner
- STU- Student
- UNEM- Unemployed
- WAIT- Waiter/Waitress
- Y-Yes